

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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R 171830Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY LIMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1855

INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

AMEMBASSY QUITO

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

AMEMBASSY CARACAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 8480

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, PINT, PFOR, PE

SUBJECT: SU-22 DEVELOPMENTS

REF: LA PAZ 7327, LIMA 8452

SUMMARY: EMBASSY CONTINUES TO RECEIVE CONTRADICTIONARY INFORMATION ON THE ALLEGED SU-22 PURCHASE. PRIME MINISTER ARBULU IN A PRESS INTERVIEW UNDERLINED THE GOP COMMITMENT TO PURCHASE THE ARMS NECESSARY FOR "AN EFFICIENT AND MODERN ARMED FORCE" FROM THOSE WHO OFFER THE BEST PRICE AND FINANCING. ARBULU ALSO STATED THE NECESSITY TO DIVERSIFY SOURCES OF SUPPLY. SOME OF PERU'S NEIGHBORS ARE NOW EXPRESSING CONCERN OVER AN ARMS BUILD UP TO THE GOP. END SUMMARY.

1. SPECULATION CONTINUES ON WHETHER PERU HAS ALREADY BOUGHT OR SOON WILL PURCHASE SOVIET AIRCRAFT. THE MATTER IS WIDELY DISCUSSED IN DIPLOMATIC CIRCLES, WITHIN THE MILITARY AND AMONG THE CITIZENRY. SOME OF THOSE WHO CLAIM TO KNOW OR TO BE PRIVY TO "CLOSELY HELD INFORMATION" ARE NOW RECEIVING SIGNALS THAT THE SOVIET PURCHASE HAS BEEN DEFERRED OR CANCELLED. AN EXAMPLE IS THE
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SEPTEMBER 15 COMMENT BY THE JAPANESE AMBASSADOR TO AMBASSADOR

DEAN THAT "THE DEAL IS OFF". THE JAPANESE AMBASSADOR CLAIMS TO HAVE BEEN TOLD THIS BY A RELIABLE HIGH LEVEL SOURCE. A PERUVIAN CIVILIAN, CLOSE TO TOP NAVY ADMIRALS, TOLD EMBOFF THAT THE GOP HAS DECIDED TO EXTRICATE ITSELF FROM THE NEARLY CONCLUDED AGREEMENT WITH THE USSR.

2. OTHERS, HOWEVER, CONTINUE TO ASSERT THAT THE PURCHASE IS FINAL. A PERUVIAN INDUSTRIALIST TOLD EMBOFF THAT THE COMMANDER OF THE GOP SUBMARINE FORCE STATED FLATLY TO HIM THAT THE SU-22 HAS BEEN PURCHASED AND WILL SOON BE DEPLOYED. OTHER MILITARY SOURCES CLAIM THE SAME.

3. EVIDENCE WHICH SUGGESTS A GOP COMMITMENT TO BUY THE SU-22 INCLUDES THE PERFUNCTORY NATURE OF AIR MINISTER POGGI'S VISIT TO GREAT BRITAIN, FRANCE AND THE U.S. (THE THREE COUNTRIES OTHER THAN THE USSR WHERE THE GOP IS OSTENSIBLY SEARCHING FOR REPLACEMENT AIRCRAFT). WEST EUROPEAN DIPLOMATS NOTE THAT POGGI EXHIBITED MINIMAL INTEREST IN A POSSIBLE AIRCRAFT PURCHASE FROM EITHER GREAT BRITAIN OR FRANCE. THE EUROPEANS ASSUME THAT THE SERIOUS BIDDING IS BETWEEN THE U.S. AND THE USSR.

4. A RECENT INTERVIEW OF PRIME MINISTER ARBULU WITH A CORRESPONDENT FROM THE MEXICAN DAILY EXCELSIOR IS AMBIGUOUS (EXCEPT FOR THE COMMITMENT TO BUY SOMETHING) BUT ARBULU STRESSES THE CRITERIA FOR A PURCHASE -- BEST PRICE AND FINANCING, NEED TO DIVERSIFY SUPPLY SOURCES TO AVOID DEPENDENCY, AND THE EFFICIENCY AND SOPHISTICATION OF THE AIRCRAFT. AT FACE VALUE AND WITHOUT REGARD TO POLITICAL COST, THE SOVIET RATHER THAN A POTENTIAL U.S. PURCHASE APPEARS TO BETTER MEET ARBULU'S CRITERIA. IN THE INTERVIEW ARBULU ADHERED STRICTLY TO THE GOP LINE THAT ARMS PURCHASES ARE SOLELY TO REPLACE OBSOLETE EQUIPMENT. HE CLAIMED THAT THEY DO NOT DETRACT FROM BUT IN FACT CONTRIBUTE TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT SINCE DEVELOPMENT IS GUARANTEED THROUGH THE NATIONAL SECURITY PROVIDED BY AN EFFICIENT AND MODERN ARMED FORCE. ARMS WILL BE ACQUIRED, SAID ARBULU, "FROM THOSE WHO OFFER US THE BEST PRICE AND FINANCING". REFERRING TO SUPPLY SOURCE, ARBULU SAID THAT "NO ARMY OR MILITARY INSTITUTION SHOULD BUY FROM ONE SUPPLIER BECAUSE THIS CREATES AN UNHEALTHY MILITARY DEPENDENCY". FINALLY ARBULU DECLARED THAT "AS A SOVEREIGN COUNTRY WE WILL

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DECIDE AUTONOMOUSLY WITHOUT REGARD TO PRESSURES OR UNJUSTIFIED ALARM".

5. THE PRESSURES AND ALARM MENTIONED BY ARBULU ARE REALITIES WHICH THE GOP WILL HAVE TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT. APART FROM A USG DEMARCHE WITH THE GOP, PERU'S NEIGHBORS ARE WEIGHING IN. BOLIVIA'S ARMY COMMANDER, GENERAL RAUL ALVAREZ PENARANDA, REPORTEDLY EXPRESSED TO THE GOP HIS FEARS OF AN UNRESTRAINED

ARMS RACE (LA PAZ 7327). ARGENTINA'S NEW AMBASSADOR VICE ADMIRAL JORGE CHEVALIER TOLD AMBASSADOR DEAN SEPTEMBER 15 THAT HE HAS DISCUSSED THE SU-22 QUESTION WITH ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF GENERAL RICHTER AND HAS REGISTERED HIS GOVERNMENT'S CONCERN ABOUT THE REPERCUSSIONS THROUGHOUT THE HEMISPHERE WHICH WILL FOLLOW AN SU-22 PURCHASE. THE ARGENTINE AMBASSADOR AT THE SAME TIME CONTENTED THAT GOP NEVEROUSNESS ABOUT THE CONTINUED DELIVERIES OF F-5'S TO CHILE REENFORCES PERU'S COMMITMENT TO SEARCH FOR NEW AIRCRAFT. FINALLY, APRA CO-SECRETARY ARMANDO VILLANUEVA TOLD EMBOFFS SEPTEMBER 16 THAT VENEZUELA HAS EXPRESSED ITS CONCERN TO THE GOP OVER AN ARMS BUILD-UP IN PERU, SPECIFICALLY THE SU-22 PURCHASE. VENEZUELA HAS IMPLIED, ACCORDING TO VILLANUEVA, THAT VENEZUELAN AID TO PERU MUST BE FOR DEVELOPMENT PURPOSES AND CANNOT BE MISCHANNIELED INTO ARMS ACQUISITIONS. VILLANUEVA, WHO WILL BE TRAVELLING TO VENEZUELA IN THE NEAR FUTURE, PLANS TO SEE PRESIDENT PEREZ AND IS CONFIDENT THAT PRESIDENT PEREZ WILL FORCEFULLY EXPRESS VENEZUELA'S CONCERN OVER A POSSIBLE ARMS RACE IN THE ANDEAN REGION TO PRESIDENT MORALES BERMUDEZ UPON THE OCCASION OF HIS DECEMBER VISIT TO CARACAS (LIMA 8452).

6. FOR THEIR PART, APRA AND OTHER CIVILIAN PARTIES FEEL IT WOULD BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE TO DIRECTLY OPPOSE ARMS PURCHASES, BECAUSE THE MILITARY IS THE SOLE INTERPRETER OF PERU'S NATIONAL SECURITY REQUIREMENTS, HOWEVER, APRA, WHICH HAS REFRAINED FROM CRITICISM OF THE GOP DURING THE STATE OF EMERGENCY, PLANS TO FAULT THE GOVERNMENT FOR ITS INCONSISTENCY IN GUARDING AGAINST DOMESTIC "COMMUNIST INFILTRATION" AT THE SAME TIME THAT IT MAINTAINS CLOSE MILITARY TIES WITH THE USSR. DEAN

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